

לב לדעת ועינים לראות ואזנים לשמע עד היום הזה
A Heart to Know, Eyes to See, and Ears to Hear, unto this day
Meditation on Parashat Ki Tavo

In this week's Parashat, Moshe instructs our people Israel this way: ¹When you have come to the land ADONAI your God is giving you as your inheritance, taken possession of it and settled there; ²you are to take the firstfruits of all the crops the ground yields, which you will harvest from your land that יהוה your Elohim is giving you, put them in a basket and go to the place where יהוה your Elohim will choose to have his name live. ³You will approach the cohen holding office at the time and say to him, 'Today I declare to יהוה your Elohim that I have come to the land יהוה your Elohim swore to our ancestors that he would give us.' ⁴The cohen will take the basket from your hand and put it down in front of the altar of יהוה your Elohim" (Deut. 26:1-4). Our Parashat also includes the laws of the tithes given to the Levites and to the poor as well as all the blessings and all the curses of Deuteronomy 28. Moshe concludes our Parashat by reminding us that: "Nevertheless, to this day יהוה has not given you a heart to understand, eyes to see or ears to hear!" (Deut. 29:4).

T'Shuvah the Hebrew word that means "to answer or return or repent" is a sort of death and rebirth: a death of the past life and the birth of a new life and a new creation: "Therefore, if anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation - the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new!" (2 Cor. 5:17). It is an awakening from the sleep induced by sin, and manifests itself as the power of the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the believer who trusts in G-d's salvation through Yeshua. T'Shuvah is a gift from the L-rd and involves four basic steps:

1. Forsaking the sin: "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

2. Regretting the breach in your relationship with G-d and others: "Have mercy on me, O G-d, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O G-d, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O G-d, O G-d of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O L-rd, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O G-d, you will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar." (Psalm 51)

3. Confessing the truth before G-d and making amends (restitution) with others we have harmed: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:19) "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (James 5:16) "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

4. Forgetting the past and moving forward with the L-rd: *“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of G-d in Mashiach Yeshua” (Philippians 3:13-14)*

The season of *T'Shuvah* runs forty days from the first of Elul to Yom Kippur. During Elul the *shofar* is sounded and special prayers are made while turning to *תשובה* for restoration each day at the synagogue. The last ten days of this 40 day period (beginning on *Yom Teruah* and ending on *Yom Kippur*) are referred to as the *“High Holy Days”* or the *“Days of Awe” (Yamim Nora'im)*. During this season of *T'Shuvah* retrospect your life, seek forgiveness and RETURN!

T'Shuvah speaks to all people. Messianic believers are called to examine their lives and see where they have departed from G-d. It is a call to examine the Scriptures and the evidence that Messiah *Y'shua* was who He said He was. Is Messiah *Y'shua* king of your life and your heart yet? G-d has always had a heart to warn people before He proclaims judgment. He warned the people before the flood, and Nineveh before it was ruined. He does not want anyone to receive the wrath of His judgment.

Repentance = Remember + Review + Return

Remember in terms of repentance means to bring back into our minds the fact that everything that we are and that we hope is because of our Savior, Messiah *Yeshua*. Without Him we were hopelessly lost and had nothing to look forward to. Scripture reminds us: *“¹¹Therefore, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth - called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised - ¹²at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Isra'el. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise. You were in this world without hope and without God. ¹³But now, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood. ¹⁴For he himself is our shalom - he has made us both one and has broken down the m'chitzah which divided us ¹⁵by destroying in his own body the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances. He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity (one new man) and thus make shalom.” (Eph. 2:11-15) What a great thing to remember! We are His family, His brothers, His people. ¹⁶and in order to reconcile to God both in a single body by being executed on a stake as a criminal and thus killing in himself that enmity. ¹⁷Also, when he came, he announced as Good News shalom to you far off and shalom to those nearby, ¹⁸news that through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers. On the contrary, you are fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's family.” (Eph. 2:16-19)*

Revue in terms of repentance means to re-examine, re-analyze, re-study, reconsider, retrospect, critique, inspect, and to thoroughly reinvestigate WHAT He has done for us. In this the month of *T'Shuvah* we want to continue making progress toward *shalom* with G-d and with man (cf. Romans 5:1 *“So, since we have come to be considered righteous by God because of our trust, let us continue to have shalom with God through our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah.”*).

What, if anything, can stop the blessing of G-d in our lives? Is the working of the Father through His Messiah *Yeshua* subject to any deterrents? Consider these Scriptures to help us decide for ourselves on the answer.

“⁵³When Yeshua had finished these parables, he left ⁵⁴and went to his home town. There he taught them in their synagogue in a way that astounded them, so that they asked, “Where do this man's wisdom and miracles come from? ⁵⁵Isn't he the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother called Miryam? and his brothers Ya'akov, Yosef, Shim'on and Y'hudah? ⁵⁶And his sisters, aren't they all with us? So where does he get all this?” ⁵⁷And they took offense at him. But Yeshua said to them, “The only place people don't respect a prophet is in his home town and in his own house.” ⁵⁸And he did few miracles there because of their lack of trust (unbelief, KJV).” (Matt. 13:53-58)

He said to them, "Because you have such little trust (unbelief, KJV)! Yes! I tell you that if you have trust as tiny as a mustard seed, you will be able to say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there!' and it will move; indeed, nothing will be impossible for you! (Matt. 17:20)

"¹Then Yeshua left and went to his home town, and his talmidim followed him. ²On Shabbat he started to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They asked, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom he has been given? What are these miracles worked through him? ³Isn't he just the carpenter? the son of Miryam? the brother of Ya'akov and Yosi and Y'hudah and Shim'on? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴But Yeshua said to them. "The only place people don't respect a prophet is in his home town, among his own relatives, and in his own house." ⁵So he could do no miracles there, other than lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶He was amazed at their lack of trust (unbelief, KJV)." (Mark 6:1-6)

²³Yeshua said to him, "What do you mean, 'if you can'? Everything is possible to someone who has trust!" ²⁴Instantly the father of the child exclaimed, "I do trust - help my lack of trust! (unbelief, KJV)" (Mark 9:23-24)

Later, Yeshua appeared to the Eleven as they were eating, and he reproached them for their lack of trust (unbelief, KJV) and their spiritual insensitivity in not having believed those who had seen him after he had risen. (Mark 16:14)

²⁰He did not by lack of trust (unbelief, KJV) decide against God's promises. On the contrary, by trust he was given power as he gave glory to God, ²¹for he was fully convinced that what God had promised he could also accomplish. ²²This is why it was credited to his account as righteousness. ²³But the words, "it was credited to his account...", were not written for him only. ²⁴They were written also for us, who will certainly have our account credited too, because we have trusted in him who raised Yeshua our Lord from the dead. (Romans 4:20-24)

¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and you - a wild olive - were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸then don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you. ¹⁹So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust (unbelief, KJV). However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified! ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly won't spare you! ²²So take a good look at God's kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, God's kindness toward you - provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you too will be cut off! ²³Moreover, the others, if they do not persist in their lack of trust (unbelief, KJV), will be grafted in; because God is able to graft them back in. ²⁴For if you were cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree! ²⁵For, brothers, I want you to understand this truth which God formerly concealed but has now revealed, so that you won't imagine you know more than you actually do. It is that stoniness, to a degree, has come upon Isra'el, until the Gentile world enters in its fullness; ²⁶and that it is in this way that all Isra'el will be saved. As the Tanakh says, "Out of Tziyon will come the Redeemer; he will turn away ungodliness from Ya'akov ²⁷and this will be my covenant with them, ... when I take away their sins." ²⁸With respect to the Good News they are hated for your sake. But with respect to being chosen they are loved for the Patriarchs' sake, ²⁹for God's free gifts and his calling are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you yourselves were disobedient to God before but have received mercy now because of Isra'el's disobedience (unbelief, KJV); ³¹so also Isra'el has been disobedient now, so that by your showing them the same mercy that God has shown you, they too may now receive God's mercy. ³²For God has shut up all mankind together in disobedience (unbelief, KJV), in order that he might show mercy to all. (Romans 11:17-32)

¹²Watch out, brothers, so that there will not be in any one of you an evil heart lacking trust (unbelief, KJV), which could lead you to apostatize from the living God!... ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of lack of trust (unbelief, KJV). (Hebrews 3:12, 19)

⁶Therefore, since it still remains for some to enter it, and those who received the Good News earlier did not enter, because of unbelief (KJV)... ¹¹Therefore, let us do our best to enter that rest; so that no one will fall short because of the same kind of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:6, 11)

Unbelief stops the L-rd's blessings! Unbelief prevents miracles. Unbelief stops our ministry against principalities and powers. Unbelief keeps us in the "being weighed in the balance and found wanting." (Dan. 5:27). "...he could do no miracles there, other than lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them." (Mark 6:5) Unbelief causes *Yeshua* to want to rebuke us. Unbelief would have stopped Abraham from reaching the Father's goals for him. Unbelief is keeping our people from being grafted into their own Olive tree. Unbelief causes God to shut up all mankind. Unbelief leads to apostasy. Unbelief keeps us from entering our Shabbat rest and fall short of the mark. I agree with the father of the child in Mark 9:24 "L-rd, help thou my unbelief!"

A Time to Return

So here we are, approaching *Yom Teruah*, and what shall we do as we prepare for His High Holy Days? We should stop our falling short of the mark—it is time to start trusting the L-rd, His *Ruach* and His Messiah *Yeshua*. This is at the very core of obedience. This is part of moving forward as a congregation and "possessing the land." No wonder Scripture states emphatically: "without trusting, it is impossible to be well pleasing to God, because whoever approaches him must trust that he does exist and that he becomes a Rewarder to those who seek him out." (Hebrews 11:6) Many of you are operating in various degrees of unbelief—it is time to stop it! By His *Ruach*, we can obtain His help for our unbelief.

Let us today ask to have a *heart to know*, *eyes to see*, and *ears to hear*. Then we will do and we will obey as we **Remember, Review, Repent and Return** to *Adonai* and complete our *t'shuvah*. Let us pray...